

electronic fingerprint identification system had been in synch with the FBI's, the agents would have discovered Batres-Martinez's extensive criminal record. Given his prior deportations, Batres-Martinez could have been charged with re-entry after deportation, a felony that carries a substantial prison sentence. In any event, Batres-Martinez told police in Klamath Falls that he entered the U.S. on Aug. 11, 2002, that time coming through New Mexico. He said he hopped a freight train for San Bernardino, Calif., and looked for work, without success, from Los Angeles to Stockton. When he heard that he might have better luck in Portland, he hopped another train but got mixed up in a freight yard and ended up in Klamath Falls.

To avoid the death penalty, Batres-Martinez pleaded guilty to the murder of Sister Helena Maria, attempted aggravated murder of Sister Mary Louise and rape of both nuns. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

As for U.S. immigration authorities, they were characteristically ineffectual. On Sept. 5, four days after the murder, the INS faxed an immigration detainer to the Klamath County jail, concerning Maximiliano Silerio Esparza, also known as Victor Batres-Martinez: "You are advised that the action below has been taken by the Immigration and Naturalization Service concerning the above-named inmate of your institution: Investigation has been initiated to determine whether this person is subject to removal from the United States."

Both political parties and their candidates pay lip service to controlling the borders. But neither President Bush nor Senator Kerry supports a system that would end the incentives for border crossers by cracking down on the employers of illegals. T.J. Bonner, president of the National Border Patrol Council, a labor organization that represents 10,000 border-patrol employees, believes the solution is obvious. The U.S. government, he says, should "issue a single document that's counterfeit proof, that has an embedded photograph, that says this person has a right to work in the U.S. And that document is the Social Security card. It's not a national ID card."

It's a card that you have to carry when you apply for a job and only then. The employers run it through a scanner, and they get an answer in short order that says, Yes, you may hire, or No, you may not. That would cut off 98% of all the traffic across the border. With your work force of 10,000 border-patrol agents, you actually could control the borders."

But Bonner doesn't see that happening anytime soon because of pressure from corporate America. And all the available legislative evidence of the past quarter-century supports that view. "All the politicians—it doesn't matter which side of the aisle you're on—rely heavily on the donations from Big Business," he says, "and Big Business likes this system [of cheap illegal labor]."

Unfortunately, in the post-9/11 world, this system puts us in jeopardy."

In the 9/11 commission's final report, now on the best-seller lists, the panel of investigators took note of the immigration breakdown in general, saying that "two systemic weaknesses came together in our border system's inability to contribute to an effective defense against the 9/11 attacks: a lack of well-developed counterterrorism measures as a part of border security and an immigration system not able to deliver on its basic commitments, much less support counterterrorism. These weaknesses have been reduced but are far from being overcome."

Folks on the border who must deal daily with the throngs of illegals are not optimistic that the Federal Government will change its ways.

As Cochise County Sheriff Dever dryly observes, "People in Washington get up in the morning, their laundry is done, their floors are cleaned, their meals are cooked. Guess who's doing that?"

THE BUSH MEDICARE BILL'S DIRTY LAUNDRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, America's newspapers are widely read, except on Saturdays. So it is not much of a surprise that the Bush administration waited until late on a Friday afternoon leading into Labor Day weekend to announce that they were raising Medicare premiums by a record 17.4 percent. That is the sort of news, however, you just cannot suppress, so the news that Saturday was all about the Bush administration's plans to impose the biggest premium increase in Medicare's 38-year history. But the White House public relations office is nothing, if not tenacious. So faced with the bad news and faced with the blame for that increase that would naturally affix to the Bush administration, they did what they always do, they tried to shift the blame. Even though the Republicans have controlled the House and the Senate and the White House for the last 3½ years, it is actually the Democrats, they said, who are responsible for the premium increase. But no one bought it then and no one buys it now. The facts are the facts and no amount of spin, no amount of revisionist history, can change the facts.

Before the Bush Medicare bill became law, the nonpartisan Medicare trustees estimated the monthly Medicare premium increase for 2005 would be \$2. After the Bush Medicare bill became law, the premium increase instead jumped \$11.60. That is the 17.4 percent record increase. The facts are that the premium increase after the Bush Medicare law, which was written by the drug and insurance companies, is five times larger than the premium increase estimated before Congress passed the Medicare law.

So where is all that money going? Where are the billions of dollars out of seniors' pockets, that huge increase, where are those dollars going? The Bush administration is quick to remind us that some of it goes to new preventive health care benefits. That is true. But what they are less eager to say is that a whole lot of it is going directly from seniors' pockets into the pockets of the biggest HMO insurance companies in the country.

The Bush Medicare law creates a \$23.5 billion slush fund that HMOs can use to lure seniors out of Medicare and out of Medicare's reliable, equitable core program into the HMO private insurance. This windfall is in addition, this insurance company payoff, to the payments HMOs receive in exchange

for covering enrollees. It is a bonus largely paid for because of major political contributions the insurance and the drug industries have made to the Bush administration. Seniors who already spend more than 20 percent of their incomes on out-of-pocket health care costs are receiving a giant increase in their Medicare premiums, and HMOs are receiving a giant boost to their bottom line. HMO profits already, before the Bush administration did this, jumped 50 percent last year. They hardly need more money from America's overstretched seniors.

Social Security benefits for seniors will increase by 2 percent next year. So the Social Security increase and the checks that seniors get will go up 2 percent. The Medicare premiums will go up 17 percent. I will say it again. The Bush administration is draining billions from the Medicare trust fund into the pockets of the big insurance companies. At the same time, the Bush administration is emptying the pockets of America's seniors, again to the tune of billions of dollars.

It is no secret that President Bush and his privatization of Medicare plans wants to take the responsibility for retiree health care away from Medicare and give it to HMOs. But to actually make seniors pay more so the President can pave over their Medicare program, every senior should be enraged, every American taxpayer should be outraged and none of us should put up with it.

The bottom line is the Medicare legislation which the President pushed through this Congress and signed was written by the drug industry and the insurance industry. Medicare premiums went up 17 percent announced by the administration earlier this month and the drug companies and the insurance companies have given President Bush and the Republican leadership tens of millions of dollars in political contributions this year. In the end, it is really as simple as that.

STENHOLM DEBT LIMIT AMENDMENT TO TREASURY TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, 3½ years ago, there was a lot of talk around here about budget surpluses. Some folks actually claimed there was a danger that the government would pay off our debt held by the public too quickly. Today, projections of large budget surpluses have been replaced with projections of deficits as far as the eye can see, and the administration is asking Congress to approve another increase in the debt limit, the credit card limit, if you please, for the United States of America.

Last year, the Republican leadership slipped through a \$984 billion increase

in the debt limit, the largest increase in history, without an up-or-down vote in the House of Representatives. This came less than 8 months after we raised the Federal debt ceiling by \$450 billion. To put that in proper perspective, it took our country 204 years to borrow the first \$984 billion. The Treasury Department estimates that the national debt will exceed the statutory debt limit, which is currently \$7.384 trillion, sometime in late September or October, just before the election.

But instead of taking responsibility to pass an increase in the debt limit to pay for our policies, the leadership is counting on the Treasury Department to rely on so-called extraordinary actions, such as dipping into retirement trust funds to avoid reaching the statutory debt limit until mid November and avoid a vote on legislation increasing the debt limit until a lame duck session after the election. These extraordinary actions should be a last resort to avoid a default during a crisis, not a routine action used for political convenience. It would be irresponsible to take funds from retirement trust funds simply to avoid a discussion of the fiscal problems highlighted by the need to increase the debt limit.

When the House resumes consideration of the Treasury Transportation appropriations bill today, I will offer an amendment which would prohibit the Secretary of Treasury from dipping into retirement trust funds in order to circumvent the statutory debt limit. The effect of my amendment would be to force Congress to take responsibility for the increase in the national debt by approving an increase in the debt limit before adjourning in October instead of deferring action until a lame duck session. Congress should have a full and open debate on increasing our national debt limit above \$8 trillion instead of relying on financial maneuvers to avoid a vote.

There would be no risk of default if Congress met its responsibility to approve an increase in the debt limit before we adjourn for the election. If my Republican colleagues honestly believe that tax cuts with borrowed money is good economic policy, they should be willing to stand up and vote to increase the national debt to pay for their tax cuts instead of relying on financial maneuvers. Just like credit card spending limits serve as tools to force families to examine their household budgets, the debt limit reminds Congress and the President to evaluate our budget policies.

The national debt has increased by \$670 billion over the last 12 months and \$1.5 trillion over the last 3 years. The Congressional Budget Office projects that the national debt will exceed \$10 trillion in just over 4 years under our current budget policies. As of the end of April, \$1.813 trillion of our debt was held by foreign investors, more than \$1 trillion of which is held by official institutions. Japan now holds \$695 billion of our debt, and the Chinese another

\$217 billion. Despite this, the leadership of this body is talking about bringing up legislation this week that would add another \$130 billion to that debt.

We should not pay for tax cuts or spending by borrowing money against our children's future. Congress should be required to sit down and figure out how to make things fit within a budget just like families do every day. The borrow-and-spend policies of the current majority will leave a crushing debt burden for future generations who do not have any say in what we are doing today and do not benefit from the tax cuts and spending programs for current generations.

The one tax that cannot be repealed is the debt tax, the cost of paying interest on our national debt. The debt tax consumed 18 percent of all government revenues to pay interest on the national debt last year and 40 percent of every dime of income taxes is required to pay interest today at current interest rates. Congress should not grant the administration a blank check to continue on the path of deficit spending. Before we vote to increase the debt limit, we should reinstate the budget enforcement rules which make it harder to pass legislation which would put us further into debt, including pay-as-you-go for all legislation.

If the leadership were willing to work with us to add meaningful budget enforcement provisions to legislation increasing the debt limit, the Blue Dog Democrats would gladly supply bipartisan support for an increase in the debt limit. But if the majority wants to continue with their economic policies that have us on a path to running up more than \$10 trillion in debt by the end of the decade, they should be willing to step up to the plate and approve the increase in the debt limit necessary to pay for their policies and not hide until after the elections to tell the people what the results are.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 53 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, offered the following prayer:

As we begin legislative deliberations in this great shrine of democracy, we call to mind the words of an American original, Sam Levensen, that Spanish-

teacher-turned-entertainer whose homespun stories about his immigrant parents delighted our Nation for generations. Upon his death, Levensen's children discovered their father's ethical will containing these prayerful sentiments:

To America, I owe a debt for the opportunity it gave me to be free and to be me. To my parents I owe America. They gave it to me, and I leave it to you. Take good care of it.

To the Bible, I owe the belief that the human does not live by bread alone, nor do we live alone at all. This is also the democratic tradition. Preserve it.

In this year marking the 350th anniversary of Jewish life in this great land, may we all acknowledge our debt to America, to the courageous immigrants who gave us this national inheritance, and to the Source of All for endowing us with the benefit of our patriot's dream, a Nation pledged to uphold the conviction that liberty and justice are for all.

Thankful are we this day for the manifold blessings that are our daily portion and possession in this great and blessed Nation.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 138. Concurrent resolution commending John W. Kluge for his dedication and commitment to the United States on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

The message also announced that the Secretary be directed to request the return of (H.R. 4567) "An act making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes," in compliance with a request of the Senate for the return thereof.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public law 106-170, the